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SERMON CCLXVIII.

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THE SPIRIT OF THE BIBLE.

Ps. CXIX. 156.—*Quicken me according to thy judgments.*

THE Psalm from which this passage is selected, besides its numerous particular instructions, is not incorrectly viewed, also, in its general tone, as a *test of Christian feeling and experience*. Here, the established believer meets with almost every thing he has thought and felt respecting the Bible, and its message of God's mercy to this guilty world. The rich variety of his experience in this matter, is here exhibited with the utmost fidelity. He *knows* that the spirit which dictated these warm expressions of regard for the Sacred Volume, and these delineations of its effects, is a searcher of his own spirit, and congenial to it. Whatever is unlike it, he is assured is unholy and unchristian.

The Psalmist, after acknowledging the greatness of the Lord's tender mercies, entreats that he may be quickened according to the divine judgments, that is to say, agreeably to God's message in his written word. The terms judgments, statutes, testimonies, and the like, in the present Psalm, designate, as you are aware, the Sacred Scriptures, so far as they were then communicated. This quickening according to the judgments or the word of God, I consider the same thing as *having the spirit of the Bible within us*. In agreement with the sentiment thus suggested by the text, at least in the way of accommodation, the following hints are thrown out, in the hope that the Divine Sanctifier will make the needful application to

your hearts. Let, then, the thought be prominently brought into view—that it is all-indispensable the spirit of the Bible should be infused into every soul.

Let it, in the *first* place, be briefly inquired what is that spirit.

The spirit of the Bible is its moral peculiarity—is the temper and feeling which it breathes, and with which it imbues the mind that receives it. This, indeed, would present a wide field of remark, as it is nothing less than the whole of experimental religion. But it is designed here to touch only on a few leading thoughts.

First, the spirit of the Bible is a spirit of *truth*. It is marked, in every part of it, by the veracity of Him who dictated its contents. It teaches truth, and truth only, and that of the highest concernment to the children of men; so that whatever is revealed in the Sacred Volume may be entirely depended on, and indeed demands unhesitating belief. But its spirit is that of truth, not only as teaching truth, but as inspiring a *love* of it. For to him who obtains his religious views from the Bible, there is the operation almost of a charm in the communications of that book. Nothing seems to him so sure and so conformed to the reality of things, as those communications; and he recurs to them at times with intense delight. Nothing seems to him more desirable than truth, and such truth, and he is made indeed to love it wherever he traces any vestiges of it. He is in search of this more than the philosopher's stone, whatever field of inquiry he surveys—whether the heavens or the earth—whether creation, providence, or grace. A great American scholar and philosopher, who lately deceased among us, is said to have uttered *truth, truth, truth*, as the last words which he spoke. It may well be the motto of every one, and that in a higher sense, perhaps, than was intended by the person alluded to. The Bible especially inspires a noble love of truth, and lights up the unquenchable flame of religious investigation in every bosom which is imbued with its influence.

The spirit of the Bible is also a spirit of *love*. It breathes the benevolence of its author in every page. It exhibits a love on the part of God our Savior, which is unparalleled in the history of the universe. And it is calculated to transmit this holy sentiment to the hearts of those whom it savingly benefits. Love becomes one of their chief characteristics—love to being in general, to all beings—to God first of all, and to his creatures, of whatever rank or degree of intelligence, for his sake. This is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Bible Christians. In their case, the native character of enmity and selfishness is changed, and the beauty of disinterested, impartial love shines in their disposition and conduct. The

Bible teaches and inspires the love of complacency towards all holy beings, and fills the hearts of Christians with good-will towards every rational creature, whether good or evil. In respect to our fellow-men, in particular, it inculcates a broad and effective philanthropy. None among them are so degraded, vicious, or unworthy, as not to become the objects of that benevolence with which the Bible imbues the soul. White or colored, the freeman or the slave, civilized or savage, rich or poor—all come under the law of love, as the Christian reads his Bible, and as it leads him to practice. That message of God's mercy, wherever it is welcomed, tends utterly to banish the malignant and selfish passions, and to implant the kind, gentle, and social virtues in their room.

The spirit of the Bible is likewise that of *purity*. By this quality all its communications are distinguished, and its unvarying aim is to produce a morally upright state of the soul in every person who is brought within its influence. It is God's chief instrument in effecting moral changes among sinners, and in adorning them with the beauties of holiness. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." All the exhibitions and precepts of the divine word are stamped by holiness. They are holy in their nature and in their tendency. The Bible inculcates nothing wrong, either in essence or in form. No incorrect principle—no unsafe rule of life, was ever legitimately derived from that book. Nothing there contaminates and debases the mind, but every thing is adapted to purify and elevate it. Every thing there breathes of purity. The law is pure—the gospel is pure. Right motives of conduct are enjoined. Holy objects of pursuit are placed before the mind. Every divine communication is designed to inspire purity within. When the word is learned and received in some measure as it should be, it imparts a love of purity, and produces actual purity of thought, conversation, and conduct. It is, in fine, the great means which the Spirit of God employs in preparing sinners for that blessedness which is pronounced upon the pure in heart, and which is impliedly promised to those who follow holiness, namely, that they shall see God.

The spirit of the Bible is moreover that of *humility*. That sense of guilt and unworthiness—that low opinion of our own merits and attainments—that esteeming of others as better than ourselves, which characterizes the children of God, is emphatically the scriptural temper. It is a moral peculiarity which strikes every one who becomes acquainted with the Bible and the system of religion which it teaches. It is a temper unknown to the world, and indeed directly opposed to the feelings of worldly men. A haughty, self-sufficient, in-

dependent disposition, is more commonly that of unrenewed man. He has no proper sense of his demerit as a sinner, and does not seem to understand his assigned place before God or his fellow-creatures. *They* have conversed with the word of God in vain, who have not been taught this cardinal virtue. Its whole plan of salvation, as well as its individual precepts, are designed to abase the proud heart, to strip the sinner of every plea of self-preference—of every claim to good, except in the sovereign mercy of God through Jesus Christ. And its action on minds already renewed, prepares them continually to mortify the appetite for worldly great things and consideration among men. The good servant of God, who was in the habit of stopping his ears, that he might not hear the commendations which were bestowed upon his public performances, is only an example of a more palpable form in which this temper is expressed. Pagan antiquity was so ignorant of this characteristic of a truly excellent nature, that it had no name to designate it. The humility of the cultivated Greek and Roman was meanness of spirit. But in the nomenclature of Christianity it is the only moral worth.

The spirit of the Bible is furthermore a spirit of *filial confidence*. It teaches the obligation of faith and dependance on God, as no other book does; points to doctrines that must be believed, and a Savior who must be confided in—a Savior who is the only sufficient and all-sufficient object of human hope, and shows by examples the power of this principle in the heart, in its triumph over moral and physical evil. They who obtain and manifest the spirit of the Bible, are men of faith. They trust in God—they trust in Christ, as the only rock of safety, as the only refuge of lost sinners. Their reliance on him is the reliance of children, and it leads them to adopt the filial prayer of "Abba Father." They cultivate this grace as peculiarly becoming those who are "bought with a price," and who expect a glorious inheritance of immortality. If "the evil days" are arrived, if trials thicken, if events take place differently from what was to be hoped, still they trust in God, believing that all occurrences are at his control, that the hearts of men are swayed by his influence, and that he will fulfil his own good, though inscrutable, purposes, through every scene of confusion, darkness, disappointment, and sin, in this world. In the event of death, they carry the temper of the Bible with them, meekly and confidently, though it may be with much anguish of body, resigning their spirits into the hands of Jesus, and humbly hoping to be received and remembered in his kingdom.

In *public* trials, they who have been taught of God in his word, carry the same confidence with them. It may not be seen, at

first, in what manner evil can be averted. Indeed it is not known but that it is best that the evil feared should be inflicted. The chastisement may be needed. The work of God, perhaps, will not be revived without it—certainly not without the humiliation which divine inflictions are designed to produce. Still they whose temper is framed after the scriptural model, will trust in God that deliverance shall be accomplished, if to him it seems best. They will not prematurely despair, repine, and give up all exertion. If no human arm or wisdom can effect the salvation of a community, they doubt not that God, in his might and mercy, can do it.

The spirit of the Bible, in addition to all the above, is that of *obedience*. Such a disposition is found in all whom it has savingly enlightened and impressed. To do what God has bidden, and to refrain from doing what he has prohibited, constitutes the peculiar character and life of piety. An obedient temper is the prominent trait in every renewed mind. It is the ultimate and crowning excellence and test of religion. We may appeal to that in order to know whether we are Christians or not, when every other criterion has been applied and left us in uncertainty. It comes, then, to be a question of fact—of actual occurrence. We may take, as the matter of our judgments, that which is palpable and immediately obvious to the senses or to the mind. What is the manner of life? What is the course of conduct? What are the daily habits of feeling and performance in regard to the truths and precepts of Scripture? Is there a coincidence between the one and the other? The true believer's plan of life always includes universal compliance with the commands and will of God. That is a settled purpose, from which he does not habitually and knowingly deviate. And it is obedience within as well as without. It is the rule of the disposition and of the heart, as well as of the overt acts. They who are not willing to obey God in his word, and are inclined to make excuses for sloth and inaction—who prevailingly omit duty and seek to extenuate their faults, and especially who feel that they may occasionally venture on an act of transgression, however slight—are far, very far, from having the spirit of the Bible wrought in them. They manifest that they know as yet nothing as they ought to know—that they have come in contact with the word to little purpose, if they have not learned the great point on which it insists; or if, having learned it, they refuse compliance.

Such, in a few particulars, concisely stated, is the spirit of the Bible. As we may well wish to know how it may be transferred to ourselves, a direction or two will here be given.

This temper may be acquired, first, by *frequent reading and meditation of the Scriptures*. A practice of this kind is essential in order to realize so happy a result. It is the same here as in other subjects of investigation. Diligence and assiduity are to be applied to the sacred volume. It is to be much read and meditated upon. It is to be made a study, with such powers and means and opportunities as you possess. How can you understand it unless you investigate it? and how can you imbibe its spirit and the feelings it is adapted to impart, unless you understand it—understand it in some good degree? The more it is studied and understood, the more will you feel its influence, other things being equal. Persons distinguished for piety have been distinguished for their acquaintance with the Bible. It is a book which they have loved daily and frequently to read—to which they have resorted more than to any other for light, consolation, and heavenly wisdom, and on which their habitual thoughts and meditations have been employed—often their best powers of comparison and analysis been expended. It is quite natural to think that the man, as accounts state, who was in the habit of reading his Bible through once every month, must have loved it in no ordinary degree, and deeply drank of its spirit. Although I here speak of an attention to the inspired volume chiefly for devotional purposes, yet the scope of these remarks may include also a methodical and critical study of it.

Again—the spirit of the Bible is acquired by means of *true-hearted prayer*. This must be added to the reading and study of the word. Such an exercise indicateth the temper which is suitable in learning or interpreting the sacred oracles. It is connected with a disposition essential to a profitable attention to the Bible. Fervent prayer also betokens the sincere desires of the mind, and called forth by such an interest as God's precious truth, it will not fail to enlist those energies which may be demanded for the purpose in view. It moreover secures the assistance of the Holy Spirit to render the word plain, and to impress its communications on the mind. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things"—a declaration which, as applied to believers now, may lead them to expect, from such an influence, an adequate acquaintance with divine truth. With the Spirit's guidance, obtained through prayer, none will essentially err, or "stumble at the word, being disobedient." Light, and glory, and beauty from the word, will follow in the wake of prayer.

Again—you acquire the spirit of the Bible by *practising according to its rule*, so far as you know it—so far as you are enlightened. This will be, of course, in successive measures. "Then shall we

know, if we follow on to know the Lord." "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." God gives us his grace in proportion as his communications are practically regarded. That is a law of his spiritual kingdom. Let a person live according to the light he has derived from the Bible, and he shall have increased light. His spirit will become more and more in accordance with the divine rule. The truth, purity, love, humility, faith, and obedience, which have been spoken of, will be more completely diffused through all his moral nature.

Furthermore, the spirit of the Bible will be obtained by *feeling our indebtedness to God and dependance on his Spirit for the gift*. Certainly it will not be obtained without such a reference. In such a concern, we are not permitted to trust in our own independent efforts, or to ascribe our spiritual acquisitions to any thing short of the divine assistance. Here our own strength is weakness—our own light is darkness. We are indebted to God for all that is right in us, as it is the production of his Holy Spirit. To God, therefore, we should feel our obligations, and on his Spirit should we continually depend, and then the grace of salvation will abundantly flow into our souls. Then shall we consistently bear about with us the temper of God's word, and it will, as it were, shine in our very countenances.

Now, in respect to the importance of being imbued with this temper, the following illustrations and arguments may be urged. Every child of God should fervently plead, "Quicken me according to thy judgments," the communications of the inspired book. It deserves every consistent, strenuous effort, to be quickened, made alive, animated, revived in religion, by such an influence—to show the piety of the Bible in our whole hearts and lives.

1. This scriptural activity constitutes *true nobility of soul*. The Bereans, as we are taught on one occasion, "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things" which they heard from the apostles accorded with that standard. Thus they felt the holy energy of divine truth filling and stirring their minds. It endowed them with true nobility of soul. That spirit which was thus produced, and thus efficient, is a great, a noble spirit. The Bible elevates the thoughts and views of men—raises their affections into the purer regions of invisible realities, and sets them on the pursuit of "glory, and honor, and immortality." A mind penetrated with the truths of revelation cannot be chained to this world and its fading interests—it cannot grovel in

sensuality and sin. It feels that it was made to rise above the low cares and vanities of life, and to hold communion with God and with heaven. This elevation of the mind is, of course, incompatible with covetousness and every idolatrous affection; and while diligence in the prosecution of common and necessary secular objects is employed, the soul is fervent, serving the Lord. The difference which scriptural truth makes in mankind, in respect both to their intellect and their hearts, is no less surprising than true. It refines and expands, and ennobles the soul, by many perceptible degrees, above that state in which it was uninfluenced by divine considerations. How important then is the infusion of a Bible spirit in the human mind, which is so accountable to God for its spiritual elevation in this world and above it!

2. You will *think and decide correctly on moral and religious subjects*, provided you are imbued with the spirit of God's book. The great reason why there are so many wrong judgments and decisions on morals and divine truths—so many religious controversies and altercations, is, that there obtains so deplorable a destitution of the temper of the Bible among men. Many will depart from the right and the true on these subjects, because the tone and temper of that book are unknown to their experience. They will not be controlled by its decisions—they will not yield to its claims, and this because they have not that spiritual understanding and that sanctified taste which enable the mind to see and approve that which is morally excellent. How seldom does a Bible Christian—a man who wears the impress of the Bible on his heart—whose soul is enlightened by its light, and the whole or the greater part of whose religious views have been derived from the sacred volume—err from a straight course, or fall into obvious mistakes. If we decide by the light of Scripture, we decide aright. No one's soul can be greatly jeopardized by any speculative error, when he manifests and acts out the temper inspired by that book, since in this case it can be an error only on subordinate topics, or of philosophical explanations.

3. Your *feelings will be composed and tranquil*—there will be *peace within*—when you are quickened according to the divine statutes. When your hearts are shaped by the Bible, and filled with its light and love, they are prepared for consolation. Your fears are then removed, your agitations soothed, your hopes brightened. In proportion to your heavenly feelings will be the tranquillity of your minds. God will be rejoiced in—his service will yield a divine satisfaction. The terrors of hell—a servile dread—will die away, and you will be allured to duty rather by joy than impelled to it by a

tormenting conscience. It is only unfaithfulness to God and to the Bible, in any part of our walk as Christians, that necessarily straitens and depresses the soul. Right feelings and activity in duty make room for peace. The consciousness of following the divine rule, and of always having a disposition to follow it, must have a direct and strong tendency to inspire a sweet serenity of mind.

4. Such a participation of the spirit of the Bible as has been described, *prepares us for every demanded religious service*. It is the very temper with which to go forth to our duties—our great works as Christians. It prepares us to engage in them with alacrity, with vigor, and with effect. Having learned of Christ, we know, in some degree, what is required of us, and how to engage in the divine work acceptably. A willing, subdued heart, feeling the sanctifying influence of the gospel, is ready for any service to which it is called. It is indeed the only qualification for it, as a contrary state of the affections must be connected with aversion to duty. A man uninfluenced, unaffected with the motives of God's revealed truth, is in a very unfit condition of mind for any labors and sacrifices in the cause of God. But let these motives be felt with their appropriate force, and it constitutes the very aliment of the soul to do the divine will.

5. *Your influence for good in the world* depends on the degree in which we are imbued with the spirit of the Bible. No man does good in the highest sense, unless he has a measure of this spirit. Every one must feel the effect of the sacred message on his own heart, before he can successfully recommend it to others. The truth, purity, love, humility, filial confidence, and obedience, which constitute the elements of scriptural piety, must be exhibited by those who would exert a useful influence on others—on an impenitent world. None but they who possess these and other characteristics of the gospel will study to do good—will be in the habit of devising ways and means of benefiting the souls of their fellow-men. It is the true spirit of the Bible alone that induces men to engage in the self-denying labors of benevolence. It is this temper which feeds the spring of so heavenly a charity. It is an influence of this kind which induces the philanthropist to seek out the causes of human wretchedness, and to spend his property or risk his life to remove them. It is this which inclines the converted, redeemed sinner, to meet the odium of the world, in attempts to turn his unconverted neighbors or companions from their sins and follies, and win them to Christ. It is this which sends the missionary of the cross to heathen barbarians, far from kindred and country, where he voluntarily

exiles himself from the delights of refined and intelligent society, for the sake of saving the guilty souls of these his fellow-heirs to eternity. It is this temper of God's book, wrought into the soul, forming its very texture, that finds its only proper life in these beneficent labors. How unspeakably important, then, that it should be possessed by all who would, in the highest sense, be useful in such a world as this!

6. Your *meetness for death and the judgment*, depends on the fact of your being imbued with the spirit which has been described. The inspired book was given us in order that we might form our characters according to its precepts and rules. Until, therefore, you come under an habitual influence from it, you have not answered its principal purpose in relation to yourselves. You are without a meetness to undergo the change of death, and without a prospect of experiencing, under its agonies, that support which our sinking, frail nature then requires. You are without a preparation to enter into the world of spirits, and to appear before Christ in judgment. The purifying efficacy of the truth by the Holy Spirit, is absolutely needful for all, in order to pass the scrutiny of the judgment uncondemned. To enjoy security at that fearful period, it must appear that we have profited by the Bible—that we have learned its vital truths—that we have practised its commands—that we have imbibed its peculiar genius. There is no way to be right with God, or to attain a new spiritual nature, except through the knowledge and influence of his word. As you would, then, be sustained in death—be approved in the judgment, and hear the cheering sentence of acquittal, and the joyful welcome to heaven, you will feel the necessity of realizing all the purifying effects of the scriptural message upon your hearts. You must not fail of being Christians, according to the full meaning of the term and of that book. To come short of this, is to be undone for ever.

Finally, your *present assurance of final acceptance* depends on the degree in which you are influenced by the spirit of the divine word. No one can feel within himself the evidence of the Saviour's favor except as he is actuated and controlled by that spirit. Without it, he must have an internal demonstration that he is in the wrong, and he can feel no authorized assurance that he will meet with the mercy of the Judge. He cannot have a solid basis of piety in his own view; and whatever hopes he may conceive at times, his heart will be extremely apt to fail him in the hour of trial, as many have then been cut off from every ray of comfort. The only proper persuasion, therefore, of final acceptance, rests on the reality and extent of that grace which the Bible has been the means of

producing in a sinner's mind. This is the witness in one's self, and is the true measure of a believer's enjoyment. In proportion as he feels it, will he gladly anticipate the scenes which are before him in the endless duration of the future world. All this blessedness, as he enters upon it, he will for ever ascribe to the grace of Jesus, as manifested in and through his word.

Let, then, proper views be entertained respecting the Christian Scriptures—those writings which are the medium of so much good, and fraught with the best hopes of time and eternity. Let proper views be entertained of the system of religion which they disclose and urge on the acceptance of mankind. In comparison with this system, as some one has remarked, the created universe is but a bauble. Let suitable efforts be made to spread abroad the knowledge of this religion among the perishing portions of mankind. O let the Bible, with its precious truths, and its glorious Savior, and its thrilling motives, and its heavenly spirit, be given to them, and soon given to them all! Why should they, for whom Christ died equally as for us, be left to perish? Dr. Philip, a missionary to South Africa, once disputing with an infidel, was told by the latter that he did not believe the doctrine which he himself preached: "You professors of Christianity," said the infidel, "do not believe what you profess." "What do you mean?" said Dr. Philip. The sceptic replied, "if I believed that God had given his Son to die for a wretched world, and that, in order to our salvation, it was necessary that this truth should be known, I would go round the world to tell it." By the way, what a rebuke is this to many professed Christians, who are so far from going, or being willing to go, round the world, to proclaim the story of redemption, that they will not even assist those who desire to do this deed of mercy. But the infidel might be told that this is what the missionaries of the cross are now attempting to do, and what they who liberally support them are attempting to do through their hands; since it is a correct maxim in morals, as in law, that the thing we do by another, we do ourselves. They are endeavoring to send the Bible and its religion to the ends of the earth. This is a work which is due from all who possess the Bible, and which will be felt to be important in proportion as that book is appreciated, and its spirit rules in the heart. In regard to the sceptic, above alluded to, it is not difficult to believe, that with such a temperament, in the event of conversion, he would have attempted to verify his own declaration; although the majority of men feel, on this subject, more in the indolent spirit of another infidel, who remarked, that if Christianity were true, "it ought to be

written on the skies, so that every one might know it." Written on the skies! It is far more clearly and certainly imprinted in the soul of the renewed sinner.

Although I have all along spoken of the truth of God as delivered in his word, and the heavenly mould in which it casts the heart, yet it will be conceded that his message in his providence is also important. It becomes us ever to regard it, for his providence always harmonizes with his word. We can learn from his actual dispensations much that is most valuable, and conducive to our spiritual benefit. It is well for us to observe the providence of God; for they who observe providences, as it is said, shall have providences to observe. And it is wonderful how events, in an unexpected manner, sometimes conspire to effect those purposes that are consentaneous to God's revealed truth. Good comes out of evil; and the time when men almost despair, is that which God takes to vindicate and advance most efficaciously his own cause. But it is often through a series of trials and perplexities, that he puts his people on the highway of spiritual prosperity. Baffled and defeated, and even hope failing, in regard to favorite plans, or astounded and subdued by afflictions, the church of God feels the necessity of referring her case simply to him; and distrusting her own foresight and relying on his, she is carried forward with a degree of union to the one grand result of all the divine designs, namely, the glory of God in the salvation of a dying world.

Welcome, then, in some sense, are those severe providences—those messages of fearful note, which defeat our earthly hopes, and prostrate us as in the dust. And we may well pray to be quickened or revived according to the judgments of God, taking that word in the acceptance of divine inflictions. Interpreted by the Bible, they enforce the same lesson. Who, then, among us, exposed as we are to evil, will not meekly learn it? And shall not Christians pray that the hearts of sinners may be penetrated by the same means? Since these are dead in trespasses and sins, let the Spirit of God be implored, that through the word, confirmed by his providences, they may be raised to newness of life. It is not without this same blessed instrumentality, that we may hope they will be made anxiously to inquire for the way of salvation, and experience the reality of that great change. O cannot something more effectual be done on our part to establish the dominion of truth and heaven over the precious immortal souls of such as are now strangers to the spirit of God's word! Shall not the prayers of Christians wing that quickening message to their hearts?

SERMON CCLXIX.

BY REV. RUFUS W. BAILEY, NORTH CAROLINA.

THE NATURE AND REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

I PETER, III. 15.—*Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

TRUE Christians have a *hope* of salvation, and they have a *reason* for that hope. Let us inquire, then,

1. What is the Christian's *hope*?
2. What is the *reason* for that hope?
- 1st. What is the Christian's hope?

Hope is the desire of some attainment, attended with expectation, or a conviction that the object of desire is attainable. It is, therefore, an operation of the mind which involves the action of reason and judgment. It is a mental state in contrast with despair, where all expectation of success is extinguished. This is a general definition of hope, and thus far all hope is the same. But the *Christian's* hope is distinguished from all others by its *object* and *end*.

The *object* of the Christian's hope is *heaven*, as a state of holiness and communion with God. The Christian hopes that he shall dwell in heaven, that he shall be sinless, that he shall put off this flesh, with all temptations to sin, and shall live and reign with Christ in glory. The object of the Christian hope, then, is holiness, as a personal grace, and the glory of God, as the great object of all pious desire and effort.

The *end* or effect of this hope is the commencement, gradual progress, and vigorous growth of this personal holiness in the present life, and its perfection in heaven, to the glory of God in Jesus Christ, through whose work and intercession this end is accomplished.

This is the Christian hope, in its *nature*, *object*, and *end*. It is, in the heart, a desire for holiness, with an expectation of attaining it. This hope, then, belongs, in its nature, object and end, to every Christian. It must, therefore, be attended with a personal experience, which furnishes him with a *reason* for his hope.

- 2nd. What, then, is the *reason* of the Christian's hope?

Three specifications will develop a personal experience, not only amply sufficient to justify this hope, but, by a very natural and almost necessary process, originating and sustaining it.

1. He has felt himself to be a *lost sinner*. Christ came to seek and save them that were *lost*. Not against their *will*, but by their own consent, in full view of their actual situation. Therefore, in this plan,

we see that provision is made for correcting and enlightening the mind, so that it may be led to an intelligent choice. By a divine agency, the mind is enlightened to apprehend sin in its true nature and consequences, and to see clearly the most important and solemn relations of the sinner to God, as a lawgiver. Here the soul comes to the knowledge and conviction that it is *lost*—not as a matter of speculation, but of reality.

There are many orthodox sinners, who will readily admit the principles of the Christian religion, and will speculate themselves into hell with as little emotion as they will demonstrate a principle in geometry. I do not now refer to that class of persons, nor to another very numerous class, who are very much afraid they shall be lost, and under the influence of this selfish fear, have made a great many selfish efforts to save themselves, but who have, in all this, had no care for any body, nor any thing, except themselves. The law of God, its purity, strictness, and justice, they have never considered, nor are they at all concerned that it should be preserved untarnished, and therefore the peculiar plan of redemption, as revealed in the gospel, furnishes to their minds no distinct *reason* for a hope that sinners may be saved. Of course it furnishes no *personal hope* for them. But I refer to that class of persons who have felt that they are lost, absolutely lost, gone, ruined, damned, under the broken law of God.

Did you ever feel that you were lost? Do you know the gloominess, anxiety, perplexity, terror, consternation, amazement, of being lost in a trackless wood? Have you, in that state of agitation, seen the night shut in, the stars expire, the heavens blackened with clouds, as if hung for your funeral? Have you felt the chill of the night air come over you, and heard no answer to your anxious call for help? Have you heard the yell of the wild beast, snuffing the scent of your track, and the tread of his rapid step hastening to his prey? Have you *ever felt*, under any circumstances, the conviction in full possession of your souls that you were *lost*? Then, in that conviction, you have had an illustration of the experience of the sinner brought to a knowledge of his true condition under the law. Whatever may have been your precise condition, the operations of the mind in this part of its experience are the same, the effects on the feelings and efforts are the same, all is the same, except the intelligent conviction of the different consequences which follow in the one case and in the other. It is a sense of personal danger, awakening fear, urging to effort, and sometimes ending in despair. You have often heard the story of the child in the woods, who had strayed from his path, and was found in the depth of the forest, bereft of his reason, treading, with a rapid step and vacant eye, a little circle, wringing his hands, and crying, *lost, lost, LOST!* This idea had taken entire possession of his mind, and, without making any efforts to escape, he dwells in despair on one single idea, expressed in one doleful monosyllable, *lost, lost, LOST.*

If I could open to your view the dark caverns of hell, and show you the spirits of sinners there, brought to the solemn reality of their

moral ruin, this one idea would stand out on its walls, and speak in every form and feature of its miserable tenants—Lost, lost, lost.

This is the first real conviction of the sinner under the law. And until he is brought to this reality, he never will make an effort to any effect. We may brandish the sword of the spirit, naked and polished. He will wink away the force of its brightness, and say—*surely it is the hand of a man*. We may sound in his ear that terrible idea in that terrible word lost, lost, lost, until he trembles. But he will soon recover his equanimity again, and say—*surely it is the voice of a man*. Never will he do any thing in earnest until he is convinced by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power that *he is lost*. This, therefore, is a necessary part of the experience of a true Christian, and it is the first step in his experience.

2. He feels that he has fled to Christ for salvation. Suppose yourself, if you can, in the place of the lost traveller in a trackless desert, where your calls for help should be answered only by the tiger's yell. Suppose, when you were expecting to feel that tiger's leap, an accent of mercy should revive your hope of salvation, and the warm hand of a fellow-man should embrace you and invite you to flee the impending dangers. You would return that embrace; you would commit yourself to that man with confidence that under *such* circumstances he was sincere and true. Your heart would flow with gratitude, and you would hail and love him as your benefactor. Such is Christ to the lost sinner. He is a Savior, and is embraced, and loved, and honored as such.

When the sinner comes to a knowledge of his hopeless ruin under the law, then the salvation of the gospel is approved as precisely adapted to his case. He can then believe, he trusts, and in the exercise of that trust, ripened by a divine influence to a sanctifying *faith*, Christ becomes to him the end of the law for righteousness. He is saved by Christ. Here his experience has been so impressive, so deep-wrought, so *thorough*, that it is abiding, and works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and brings forth good fruits. He cannot forget it. Can the man who has been lost and saved, forget his benefactor while he lives? No. Every thing reminds him of that benefactor. His hopes, his fears, his enjoyments, his dangers and sufferings, all awaken grateful recollections. Here is a force of experience adequate to the formation of principles, that shall influence and regulate the conduct through life. And it does so.

3. The true Christian finds a third reason to encourage a hope that he is personally interested in the gospel plan of salvation in the *effects of this faith on his life*. By a divine constitution, true faith in Christ is made to work by love, to purify the heart, and to bring forth good fruits. This is not a mere contingent circumstance of faith; *it is a part* of gospel faith, of the faith of the true Christian, and is the characteristic which distinguishes him from the devils and from wicked men. It is operative to produce infallibly in the soul certain affections, which are the abiding principles of its action.

Here, then, the duty of self-examination will find its principal materials for thought. Without a reformed life, proceeding from the love

of holiness, every other evidence of Christian character is invalidated. Here must be hatred of sin, *as sin*, which will lead to its abhorrence in every form, and a love of holiness as such, which will ensure the uniform and unwavering pursuit of it. Hence there will result an untiring effort to avoid temptation, and to live in communion with God. Here must be also an abiding love to Christians as such, and to all the precious interests of the church on earth. Here must be a supreme love to God, and a devotion of all we have and are to him. Here are principles which are operative, and adequate to reform the life and fit the soul for heaven.

The man who will perform religious duty only through respect to public sentiment, only to preserve his character, is entirely a worldly man. He who finds a relish in the pleasures and company of worldly men, which leads him to conform to their fashions and practices so far as he can without losing his standing in the church, is at heart a worldly man. He who, to save appearances, will abstain from indulgences in public, which he will cherish with warm and hearty gust in private, is strictly a sensual man. He who will not habitually bear himself in his own presence, and in the presence of God, with the same uprightness as before men, who does not fear the upbraiding of his own conscience more than the public brand, who is not an honest man in his own heart, is a heartless man; and if he be in the church he is a heartless hypocrite.

The true Christian is such by a living principle of action incorporated by a divine energy with the immortal spirit of every renewed sinner. It lives in the life of the soul, and burns as well amid polar ices as under a tropical sun, unchanged by the influence of other changes, inextinguishable even with life. In the bosom of the slave, the beggar, and the prince, it is identical. It bears the changes of prosperity and adversity, and is still the same. Place a true Christian on a desolate island, and he will be still a worshipper of God. *That* will be a place of prayer. Give him a solitary residence through eternity in any part of the universe, and *there* will be a soul happy and bright in its own glow of devotion, its fires of love.

The *reason*, then, of the Christian's hope stands first, on the clear proof which this faith furnishes of the true religion, established by prophecy and miracle, and adapted to the sinner's wants, actually effecting the moral renovation which all others have failed to do, and gaining brightness and strength amid the conflicts which have disproved and destroyed all other systems.

The *reason* for the *personal hope* which the Christian entertains, although it embraces many particulars, is here comprised in three specifications. He has known himself to be lost, has fled to Christ for salvation, and has actually found that a change of heart has resulted in a reformation of life. Brethren, have you *this hope*? and is this the *reason* of it? If not, *you* are still lost, *lost, lost*.